

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Wakonda School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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Dates of On Site Visit: December 16 & 17, 2003

Date of Report: December 29, 2003

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering committee self-assessment summary

Data sources used:

- Student progress data
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Comprehensive system of personnel development plan
- District annual needs assessment
- TAT: referral vs. non referral information
- Needs assessment information
- Information received from parent advisory council meetings
- Information from special education director
- Wakonda Times
- Transition plan for pre-school age children/Kindergarten students
- District log of newborns and families new to the district.

Promising Practices

The steering committee determined that Wakonda School meets the criteria for promising practice in the areas of child-find. The district keeps a log of newborns, their name and birthdate for upcoming screenings. Each family is contacted by mail, in addition to a notification in the Wakonda Times. Transportation and childcare have been provided when necessary. Interagencies such as Head Start and Southeast Area Cooperative personnel are present during screenings to provide assistance and information. Packets are given to each student which include: books, colors, pencils and information for the parent on “readiness skills.”

Using the data from file reviews and surveys, the steering committee determined that Wakonda School District has an effective pre-referral and referral system in place to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay. 100% of all files reviewed indicate that when a referral was received an evaluation followed. There have been no students referred in the last 10 years that were not evaluated. The steering committee determines this to be a promising practice for Wakonda School.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee finds that Wakonda District uses the DDN system to compile discipline data that is reviewed and analyzed on an annual basis when preparing the report for the SEP regarding suspension and expulsion.

Based on records provided by the SEP all of Wakonda School District Special needs teachers are fully certified. The steering committee concurs that the district meets the requirement of personnel who are appropriately supervised, and fully licensed or certified, to work with children with disabilities.

Each year all the teachers in the district complete a Comprehensive Needs Survey. Data from that survey is used to generate in-service training based on our personnel development needs. The committee agrees the district meets the requirement in this area.

Based on the policies located in the comprehensive plan on pages 95-97 the steering committee found that the district has adopted policies that are consistent with the SEP’s performance goals

Not Applicable

The steering committee finds in the area of children with disabilities that are eligible for special education and are voluntarily enrolled in private schools by their parents to participate in services is not applicable for the district at the present time, due to the fact that there are no students enrolled in private schools. Procedures are in place should the district have a student enrolled in a private school.

The steering committee finds that this is an area that is Not Applicable for the district. There are no students placed in a private school at this time. There are procedures in place outlined in the comprehensive plan should this occur in the future.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

The review team agrees that the Wakonda district's child find system includes all children residing in the school district; however this is a mandated requirement and is not considered a promising practice.

The review team agrees that the district has evaluated all children who have been referred; however this is not considered a promising practice.

Meets Requirements

The review team agrees with all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting requirements for general supervision. The team also feels that Wakonda School District meets requirements in the areas of child find and has an effective pre-referral and referral system that also meets requirements.

Areas out of compliance

The following ARSD needs to be completed immediately:

ARSD 24:05:22:03 Certified child.

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Based on the evaluations given, the review team was unable to verify eligibility or educational impact for a child currently being served. Interviews also confirmed that the child was initially placed under the category of Other Health Impaired (555) without documented evidence and later reclassified as Learning Disabled (525) without an evaluation to base the change of disability category. The district needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation in all areas of suspected disability and determine eligibility and educational need.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering committee self-assessment summary

Data sources used:

- District Instructional staff information
- Suspension and expulsion information
- Enrollment information
- Placement alternatives
- Early intervention (Part C) exit information
- Complaints
- Hearings
- Monitoring
- Numbers of children screened
- Preschool age
- School-age

- Age at referral
- Student progress data
- Personnel development information
- Number of referrals that do not result in evaluation
- District records of release to outside agencies
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training
- Budget information

Promising Practices

The steering committee using the data from surveys and their knowledge of parent advisory council meetings agrees that Wakonda School provides a free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities and meets the criteria of promising practice. The committee agrees that Wakonda School goes above and beyond what is necessary to insure parental, teacher, and student involvement in planning and implementation of the special education program.

Meets Requirements

Based on instructional staff information the committee found that school personnel have been trained on the policy and procedures to consider when removing students with disabilities, how to develop a plan to conduct a functional behavioral assessment, implement a behavioral intervention plan, and conduct a manifestation determination review.

Not applicable

Wakonda School District has not suspended or expelled a student with a disability for more than 10 cumulative school days so the steering committee finds this area non-applicable.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The review team agrees that the Parent Advisory Council, which is a joint venture between the special education department and the Title I program is a promising practice for the Wakonda School District. This program is built into their respective budgets and interviews showed that 60% of the parents of title and special education children attend the meetings. Parents are invited to meetings in the spring and fall to learn ways to help their children with learning activities. At the 2003 spring potluck picnic, a math workshop for parents was held. Parents were shown computer programs, math manipulatives were demonstrated, and all parents were given a game booklet along with dice and cards. The parents were also presented with a variety of ideas to use everyday materials to reinforce math concepts. The theme for the fall supper was reading. At that meeting, a power point presentation on reading aloud to children was presented and the two teachers provided a demonstration on reading aloud. Parents were then given a book bag with books to read to their children. The title teacher and the special education teacher reported that general information is given at these gatherings; specific information about individual students is addressed during private conferences at another time.

Meets Requirements

The review team agrees with all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting requirements for free and appropriate public education.

<h2>Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation</h2>
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A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Teacher file reviews
 1. Prior notice
 2. Telephone log
 3. Evaluation report
- Surveys
- General curriculum information
- Comprehensive plan
- Initial referral log
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- List of tests currently used in the district (date of publication)
- List of out of district testing services used by the district

Meets Requirements

The steering committee, based on the results of the file reviews, determined Wakonda School to have met the requirements of comprehensive evaluations that were conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff and also included parental input.

Using the list of valid and acceptable evaluation tools provided by the SEP, and comparing it to the list of evaluation materials the district uses, the steering committee determined that Wakonda School meets this requirement.

The steering committee based on data from file reviews, concurs that Wakonda School District provides an appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation.

After reviewing the files tabulation sheet results, the steering committee determined that Wakonda School meets the requirements for evaluation or re-evaluation procedures and instruments.

The steering committee based on file reviews and information from the Parent's Rights Brochure, agrees that Wakonda School District ensures the IEP team provides information to the parent on IEE and would consider these evaluations to determine whether a child has a particular category of disability and meets the requirement in this area.

Using the information from file reviews the steering committee agrees that 100% of the time, Wakonda School provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parent and meets this requirement.

Based on file reviews and information included in the Parent's Rights Brochure, the steering committee determined that Wakonda School District ensures that all reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements.

Based on file reviews, the steering committee agrees that Wakonda School District is using reevaluation procedures that ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team validates that the Wakonda School District is providing appropriate written notice and obtaining informed consent from parents before assessments are administered. Appropriate evaluation measures are administered. Copies of evaluations are received by parents.

Other areas identified by the steering committee as meeting requirements were not validated by the review team.

Areas out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:02, Determination of needed evaluation data

A team of individuals, including input from the student's parents, determines what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs. Through interview and file reviews, the monitoring team found the staff does not consistently implement a procedure for documenting parental input. Four out of 10 files reviewed did not have documentation of parent input into the evaluation.

ARSD 24:05:25:04, Evaluation procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and those evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child. In four out of seven files checked there was no evidence of functional assessment. Special education personnel have attempted to address the issue of functional assessment, however in six out of seven files there was no written analysis of functional evaluation.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Needs assessment information
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure
- Table L Complaints
- Table M Due process hearing requests

Meets Requirements

The steering committee based on the data provided from the file reviews, and surveys completed by parents; that all parents are informed of their parental rights under IDEA.

Based on review of the districts comprehensive plan the steering committee agrees that policies and procedures are in place should a student need a surrogate parent.

Based on file reviews the steering committee determined that Wakonda School ensures the parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought.

Based on student file reviews and records, information from the special education director, and review of policies and procedures in the comprehensive plan the steering committee determined that the district does provide the parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education.

Based on the information provided by the SEP Table L and review of the policies and procedures in the comprehensive plan, the steering committee agrees that the district has policies and procedures in place for responding to requests for due process that ensure compliance.

Not applicable

The steering committee found that the area of having policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions that ensure compliance to be Not Applicable due to the fact that Wakonda School has not received any complaints. Policies and procedures for complaint actions are outlined in the comprehensive plan.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team agrees with all areas identified by the steering committee as meeting requirements. In addition, they concluded that the Wakonda School District's policies and procedures for complaint actions also meet requirements.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent survey
- File reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher file reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel development information
- Needs assessment information
- Personnel training

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined based on the file reviews, parent and teacher surveys that the district meets the requirement of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities.

Based on file reviews, information found on the prior notice form, and in the parent brochure, the steering committee determined that Wakonda School ensures that the written notice provided for all IEP meetings, includes all the required content.

Based on file reviews the steering committee agrees that the district ensures that the IEP contains all the required content.

The steering committee determined that the district does ensure that transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests, to prepare them for post school activities. However, 3 files of 32 indicate that an assessment was not given to determine the student's interest and skills. This problem was addressed internally early in the school year between the special education director and the newly hired high school special needs teacher when she was doing an evaluation. Therefore the committee believes that since this problem has been alleviated Wakonda School meets this requirement.

The steering committee agrees that Wakonda School District has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team validates the steering committee's finding that the district meets the requirement of appropriate team membership. The team also finds that the Wakonda School District ensures that the written notice provided for all IEP meetings includes the required content and is sent to parents five days prior to the meetings unless the parent waives the five day requirement. Progress reporting was seen in all files reviewed. All files reviewed indicated the special education and related services to be provided and the accommodations and/or modifications to be provided. Transition was addressed correctly in files for students who were age 15 and older.

The review team was not able to validate that goals and objectives, and present levels of performance met the requirements.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program. Each student's individualized education program shall include:

1. A statement of the student's present levels of educational performance. In six out of seven file reviewed, the monitoring team determined that the resent levels of performance were not linked to written reports of functional assessment. Functional assessment must be completed in all areas of suspected disability and be skill based. In the seventh file, a functional assessment was completed, but in the area of reading, while the suspected area of disability was math.

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program. Each student's individualized education program shall include:

- (2) A statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, related to:

- (a) Meeting the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum; and
- (b) Meeting each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability;

Though interviews and file reviews, IEP goals and objectives were found to not be skill specific. For example: “___ will comprehend reading material at ___ grade level with 90% accuracy.” “When presented with new math concepts ___ will learn, use and master the new math skills with 80% accuracy.”

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State data tables:
 - F – Placement alternatives
 - G – Disabling conditions
 - I – Placement by age
 - J – Placement by disabling condition
- File reviews
- Parent, student, general educator surveys
- General curriculum information
- Age at placement

Meets Requirements

Based on file reviews and statements from the special education director, students at Wakonda School receive services in the least restrictive environment with the supports they need for their successful participation.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team agrees with the steering committee’s conclusion that the district meets the requirements for the least restrictive environment. An observation was completed in the second grade classroom during the morning reading activity. The teacher specifically requested that all children, including those in special education, participate in this daily activity. The story *Wiggly Squiggly*, which they had begun the day before, was read to the class by the teacher. She stopped often to ask questions and the whole class responded to the queries, made predictions, and gave examples of text-to-self connections and text-to-text connections. The teacher made sure that everyone had a chance to talk. As an observer it was impossible to pick out the special education students from the typical students.